The spread of *Cnephasia genitalana* Pierce & Metcalfe (Lep.: Tortricidae) in Huntingdonshire (VC 31)

Cnephasia genitalana, a proposed Red Data Book species, was first discovered in Huntingdonshire in Raveley Wood on 5 August 1995, while trapping with a 125watt mercury vapour light place approximately 60 cm above a white sheet. As usual all moths not readily identifiable while trapping were collected and taken home. Those not identified the following morning were then put into storage until the winter months when they would be dissected. It was during one of these dissection sessions that *C. genitalana* was discovered. The only other *Cnephasia* taken on the 5 August in Raveley Wood was *C. incertana.*

I returned to Raveley Wood the following year to see if further specimens could be taken. The 125 watt mercury vapour light was run on the 4 August 1996, but only *C. incertana* and *C. longana* were taken, so I returned to the wood on the 15 August and was rewarded with another *C. genitalana*. The following year, having successfully trapped Raveley Wood on 14 August, I discovered while dissecting the years catch of 'difficult' micros that *C. genitalana* had also been taken in Little Paxton Wood on the 25 July and in Gransden Wood on the 7 August. The equipment used in Little Paxton Wood was the same as that used in Raveley Wood, but a 6 watt actinic light trap similar to a 'Heath' trap was used in Gransden Wood. These two woods are close to the southern edge of the vice county of Huntingdonshire, while Raveley Wood is close to the centre of the county, eleven miles from Little Paxton Wood and eighteen miles from Gransden Wood, as the moth flies.

During 1998, a further three sites were added to the list. These were Little Paxton Gravel Pits and Hail Lane Spinney, Abbotsley, both in the southern part of the county and Hilton, which is towards the mid west of the county. At Little Paxton Gravel Pits the 125 watt mercury vapour was used, Hail Lane Spinney, a 6watt actinic and at Hilton a 100 watt mercury vapour place above a box trap. *C. genitalana* was seen on seven sites in 1999 and during 2000 and 2001 on a total of thirteen sites in each year, including Yaxley in the north of the county. During 2002 a total of nineteen sites produced examples of *C. genitalana*, while in 2003 twenty-six sites produced this moth.

Cnephasia genitalana has now been recorded from 40 sites in Huntingdonshire, vice county 31. All have been identified by dissection of the genitalia. This moth appears to have no preference for the type of light or method used to attract it. I have had equally large numbers at 6 watt actinics and 125 watt mercury vapour. When large numbers of *Cnephasia* species are present I do not collect them all, a random selection is made when empting over night traps and when trapping with a sheet random selections are made at intervals during the trapping period, so that those flying at different times have equal chances of being selected for identification.

The earliest date *C. genitalana* has been taken is the 26 June and the latest 29 August, however the flight period in 2003 was exceptionally early starting on the 26 June with no further examples being taken after 8 August. The 'normal' flight period

appears to be from the middle of July until the end of August with the peak being during the first and second weeks of August.

I am grateful to Andrew Frost and Steve Dudley for collecting the micros that came to their traps for identification. — BARRY DICKERSON, 27 Andrew Road, Eynesbury, St Neots, Cambs PE19 2QE (E-mail: Barry@eynesbury27.freeserve.co.uk).

Recent large outbreaks of Magpie Moth *Abraxas grossulariata* L. (Lep.: Geometridae) on heather *Calluna vulgaris* (L.) Hull on the mainland of north-west Scotland

The earliest record of the Magpie Moth *Abraxas grossulariata* occurring in large numbers on heather is given by Barrett (1901. *The Lepidoptera of the British Islands* **7**: 262) who reported that Mr. A. F. Griffiths had observed that, in the Hebrides, the larvae of this species feed, in multitudes, upon heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), and that the moths, of ordinary colour and markings, may be seen sitting, side by side, in hundreds on the rocks nearby. In June 1910, Grimshaw (*Scottish Naturalist* **1920**: 86) found hundreds, perhaps thousands, of pupae of the Magpie Moth lying in crevices of rocks on South Uist from which he drew a parallel with the report by Barrett. Sheldon (1922. *Entomologist* **55**: 34) found adult Magpie Moths swarming on the small island of Soyea near Lochinver where he had no doubt but that the larvae fed upon *Calluna vulgaris*, the usual food plants not existing on the island. Heslop-Harrison (1947. *Entomologist* **86**: 55) noted that Magpie Moths were abundant in sheltered places on the moorlands of Lewis and Harris where its larvae fed on *Calluna* and *Erica*. The first record of a colony of Magpie Moth on heather on the mainland was noted by Harper (1958. *Ent. Rec.* **70**: 91), who found a small colony near Arisaig on the west coast of Inverness-shire. Interestingly Harper noted that this species is exceedingly local and limited in numbers in northern Scotland. Harper and Langmaid (1975. *Ent. Rec.* **87**: 139-140) found Magpie Moth larvae on bog myrtle *Myrica gale* and heather on Skye. More recently Hulme (1991. *Ent. Rec.* **103**: 188) reported Magpie Moth to be common and widespread, associated with heather and bog myrtle, in coastal regions and inshore islands of NW Sutherland and Wester Ross from the Applecross Peninsula to the Kyle of Tongue. Hulme (*op. cit.*) also records a mass emergence near Loch Drumbeg (O.S. grid reference NC 1132) where many hundreds were flying or at rest on heather.

We have found larval Magpie Moth to be abundant on heather from Skye in the south to Loch Eriboll in the north and along the north coast to Dunnet Head in the east. Larval Magpie Moth cause partial damage to, and stripping of leaves from the shoots of heather. This causes a characteristic browning of the heather to occur within heathland dominated by heather. Over a number of years we have observed the characteristic browned patches of heather, variable in size, and mostly confirmed by observations of larvae, from the following localities, with dates and grid references (clockwise from Skye):

Glen Arroch in south-east Skye (28.vii.1998, NG 7321, NG 7520), Glen Torridon (27.v.1991, NG 9356);

Inverpolly (13.v.2003, NC 1015, NC 1115, NC 1116, NC 1016; 14.v.2003, NC1510; 16.v.2003, NC 1109, NC 1110; 15.vi.1997, NC 1110; 16.v.2003, NC 1111, NC 1011, NC 0910, NC 0909);